



**THE ROLE OF THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL
BROADCASTING CORPORATION (ZNBC) IN
MEETING ZAMBIA'S NEWS AND INFORMATION
NEEDS**

**A PUBLIC DISCUSSION
HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF MISA ZAMBIA'S ADVOCACY
PROGRAMME ON MEDIA LAW REFORMS IN ZAMBIA, HELD AT
PAMODZI HOTEL ON MARCH 25, 2004**

**THE ROLE OF
ZAMBIA NATIONAL BROADCASTING CORPORATION
IN MEETING
ZAMBIA'S NEWS AND INFORMATION NEEDS**

A PUBLIC DISCUSSION HELD AT PAMODZI HOTEL

DISCUSSANTS

Joseph Salasini	Acting Director General ZNBC
Margaret Chimanse	President Zambia Media Women's Association
Leonard Hikaumba	President Zambia Congress of Trade Unions

MODERATOR

Anthony Mukwita	Freelance Journalist
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Masautso Phiri

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0.1 Executive Summary

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA Zambia) organised a discussion on the Role of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation in meeting Zambia's News

and Information Needs at the Pamodzi Hotel on March 25, 2004. The discussants were Margaret Chimanse, president of the Zambia Media Women's Association (ZAMWA), Joseph Salasini, acting Director General of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) and Leonard Hikaumba, president of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). The moderator was Anthony Mukwita.

The discussion was well attended by nearly 200 people. Mukwita told his audience that each discussant would be asked to discuss the topic. He also said he would allow debate between the discussants.

Opening the discussion Chimanse said there were many views regarding the role of ZNBC in providing news and information to the Zambian public. She referred to the ZNBC (Amendment) Act number 20 of 2002. She said this was very clear about the functions of the corporation in meeting Zambia's news and information needs.

The functions as provided in the Act were varied and balanced to include programming for all sections of the population, the public interest and high professional quality standards. She said ZNBC was expected to broadcast news and Current Affairs programmes in a comprehensive, unbiased and independent manner and commentary which could be clearly distinguished from news.

She also referred to the Ad Hoc Appointments Committee and its function and the provision for the collection of fees. She said the Act was amended to support ZNBC's efforts to meet its obligation of educating, entertaining and informing the public. But she lamented that ZNBC had failed to meet the aspiration of the people. The complaints abound regarding reception in some parts of the country, programme repeats and inadequate coverage of some issues. Thus ZNBC was missing a great opportunity to become a public broadcaster as people were not getting their value for money.

And then came Salasini's turn. He was pleased to speak on ZNBC's Role in Meeting Zambia's News and Information Needs. He thanked MISA National Director, Fanwell Chembo, for giving ZNBC such an opportunity. He referred to ZNBC's background and the fact that for several years it had a monopoly of the airwaves as provider of news, information and entertainment. But the changed political environment during the third republic, he said, meant government introduced policies of liberalisation, privatisation and free enterprise and the last decade has seen the growth in new players in both electronic and print media. He said Zambia now boasted of 15 new radio stations and a couple of TV stations not to mention the multi channel satellite based pay TV and a number of print media organisations.

But ZNBC remained the single biggest and primary vehicle for news and information to the public and the ultimate platform for national conversations in discussing matters of national interest. Salasini said ZNBC the national broadcaster has the mandate to take the signal to the entire country which it has done and its channels were mostly countrywide included three radio channels and one-TV channel broadcasting in seven local languages and in English.

He revealed that ZNBC had plans to expand its Radio 4 signal to areas outside the old line of rail and with the help of Micro link had also developed a website. There were also plans to place Radio One on the Internet. He said ZNBC would continue to place high value on its purpose of meeting Zambia's news and information needs and gave an outline of ZNBC's hard informative news content and its programming profile. The radio and TV news accounted for 50 hours or 3000

minutes per week. Television also accounted for 10 hours of informative programmes and an additional 4 hours of unfiltered interactive programmes. Radio had a combined total of 100 hours of informative programmes. he said, and these facts showed that ZNBC was carrying out its mandate to provide news and information to the public. ZNBC had also assumed its role on issues of HIV and AIDS and was ready to joint others in fighting the disease.

ZNBC has its limitations, Salasini admitted, and these included failing obsolete studio equipment, declining transmission capacities and limited provision of production equipment and the associated back up facilities.

But despite these limitations ZNBC was determined, and in keeping with its better TV campaign, to deliver on its commitments. He listed the following successes - balanced and diverse news content, better programming in all area of television and Radio with special regard to all interest groups, improved content and quality of our local productions by establishing ZNBC presence in rural areas. Others were sourcing quality foreign programmes that will compliment local ones, maintaining the highest ethical standards of Broadcasting and being more accessible to all its customers and responding to their concerns. Some equipment had become fully reinstated, he said, and the improvements were a good sign which would lead to better developments at ZNBC.

Hikaumba said the topic on ZNBC's ability to meet Zambia's news and information needs was important. First, however, ZNBC must provide equal access to people's expectation as per ZNBC (Amendment) Act number 20 of 2002. He repeated what was provided in the same Act. He acknowledged that ZNBC had a big role to play and its limitations. These included inadequate funds, lack of equipment for newsgathering and conditions of service for workers that were not so good. However, despite these limitations, Hikaumba said, ZNBC should provide services within the amended Act especially that the corporation was now charging licence fees.

Hikaumba observed that ZNBC's performance had not lived to people's expectations. Some places in the country had no access to the TV signal, even where there was TV biased dissemination of information affected viewers as MMD programmes were promoted and preferred, especially on political issues. He recalled big coverage given to the president and his vice president but none to the opposition. What was disturbing was continued manipulation of programming at ZNBC by the political leadership; he said and gave examples involving himself and the ZCTU. A Radio 2 programme on Saturdays that was already paid for was suspended. ZNBC allowed a TV programme on PAYE featuring the minister of Finance but cancelled one for the ZCTU. A second TV programme, a Sunday interview organised by Frank Mutubila was also cancelled despite having been pre-recorded the previous Wednesday. Hikaumba warned that the labour movement would boycott paying licences and not to pay ZESCO if unfair coverage continued.

The moderator asked Salasini to react to Hikaumba's complaints. Salasini said the nature of public broadcasting was that sometimes programmes are cancelled because of sound or picture quality. He could not say what caused the cancellation of Hikaumba's programme. The Sunday interview was replaced by live football coverage had suffered a common fate, he said. However, he bemoaned the level of compliance among eligible TV licence payers which was only 43 per cent.

The moderator said he would ask Ben Kangwa to assist Salasini in responding to some questions that might arise. He asked Chimanse to react to Salasini's views.

Chimanse said there was no doubt that the public would like to help ZNBC, however, the public will not support ZNBC if the corporation did not drastically change. She dismissed Salasini's bad picture bad sound argument and demanded honesty. "If there is censorship tell us," she said sharply.

The discussion was quite as sharp. Simon Mwamba from Yatsani Radio wondered as to what pressure Salasini had talked about. He also wondered whether MMD paid for its coverage. Robert Mwanza, a Kitwe-based lawyer said he had travelled to Lusaka specifically for the public discussion. He said ZNBC was lucky to get the 43 per cent compliance and that the 57 per cent who do not comply were seriously disenchanted.

Salasini said the pressure he was talking about was from the many demands for ZNBC services. On MMD coverage there was need to distinguish between discussion programmes that were paid for and renewal of party cards when the Republican president was in attendance and provincial conferences which were not paid for.

Hikaumba said he would have liked a clear answer from Salasini. He said the first programme cancelled was going to be a live programme. He wondered how ZNBC anticipated a bad picture and sound from a live programme.

Kangwa said ZNBC was using ZIS and Hone TV to generate more pictures for its news programme. He said the newsroom required 10 cameras but had only three.

The moderator returned to the issue of pressure asking whether this was from Minister of Information and Broadcasting Mutale Nalumango or her deputy. But Salasini denied having any pressure during the six months he had occupied the office.

Kangwa said the pressure they were all talking about was a result of assignments from various groups.

Tembo Mzondi from South Africa was worried that the minister of Information and Broadcasting Services was not present to answer some of the questions raised by the audience. He said it was unfair to ask the acting Director General whether a member of staff in the newsroom gets pressure. He said government should take seriously issues being raised.

Emmanuel Mwamba said ZNBC was not part of media law reform campaign. It was MISA Zambia and PAZA. The acting Director General should not be there and a new board as required by the new law should bring change.

Salasini said Mwamba seemed to suggest that ZNBC management did not understand the amended act because they were not part of the media campaign. "I am not qualified to comment on that," he said. On Mzondi's view that cameras are not faulty but people Salasini said all the people at ZNBC have post basic training.

Hikaumba, who was about to leave for another engagement, said he was aware that colleagues from ZNBC were indeed under pressure though they failed to admit it.

Chimanse said she wished to echo Mzondi's comments regards the minister of Information and Broadcasting Mutale Nalumango being present to answer some questions raised. "Putting in place a new board is important," she said. "Licence fees is just a by the way." She said the ZNBC (Amendment) Act was very clear in terms of the role of ZNBC.

And responding to Emmanuel Mwamba's comment Kangwa said ZNBC had played an important role in MISA's programmes for two years before the two laws were enacted. Mbiji Mufalo said Zambia was in a coma. If a government was not functioning but Nalumango wanted to show it was working then there was something wrong. It was mentioned ZNBC had only three cameras but why should a camera find itself at the MMD secretariat? he asked.

Calisto Chitamfya admitted that he was actively involved in the better TV campaign. ZNBC had done research on the role of a licence and this was a key to removing all political and commercial control. In closing remarks Salasini said his profiling of the content in ZNBC's broadcasts spoke volumes.

"We have a lot of challenges to deal with and we will do so with our staff," he said.

But Chimanse insisted that ZNBC was an important stakeholder and that management ought to take the challenges posed by its position as a public broadcaster seriously. As a public broadcaster ZNBC belonged to the people and the starting point was the new board.

1.0 Introduction of Discussants and the topic for the night by Moderator Anthony Mukwita

The moderator Anthony Mukwita introduced the panellists and the topic. He said he had on his right Margaret Chimanse, president of the Zambia Media Women's Association (ZAMWA), on his immediate left Mr Joseph Salasini, acting Director General of the Zambia national Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) while on his far left was Mr Leonard Hikaumba, president of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). Mukwita then read the topic as "The Role of ZNBC in meeting Zambia's News and Information needs."

"I am your moderator and am Anthony Mukwita. We are discussing ZNBC, its role in meeting Zambia's news and information needs," Mukwita told his audience. He said the procedure for discussion would be as follows: He would ask each of discussants to give the topic their first shots and create debate among them, he would ask the other two discussant who not from ZNBC to react to the opening statement by ZNBC director General Joseph Salasini. After that he would then open the discussion to the public who may either comment or ask questions. He then asked Margaret Chimanse to take the first bite in discussing the topic.

2.0 Role of ZNBC in meeting Zambia's News and Information as seen by Margaret Chimanse, President Zambia Media Women's Association

Chimanse opened the discussion by saying that there are many views on the role of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation in the provision of news and information to the Zambian public. She said the ZNBC (Amendment) Act number 20

of 2002 is very clear about the functions of the corporation to meet Zambia's news and information needs. She referred to some of the functions as provided in the Act as being:

- To provide varied and balanced programming for all sections of the population
- Serve the public interest
- Meet high professional quality standards
- Broadcast news and current Affairs Programmes which are comprehensive, unbiased and independent
- Provide commentary which shall be clearly distinguished from news

She said the Act further provided for an Ad Hoc Appointments Committee, which would recommend names to the minister for appointment as part-time directors. The minister is in turn expected to present these names to the National Assembly for ratification, she said.

Additionally the Act has been amended to provide for the collection of fees to be used by the corporation. "The Act was revised to support the efforts ZNBC was making to meet its obligation of educating, entertaining and informing the public," she said. The legislators hoped the amendment of the ZNBC Act would help the corporation in meeting the increasing demands by stakeholders and the public for news and information and specifically for improving programming and content. She pointed out that this amendment came against a background of

- Debt from foreign film suppliers
- Lack of adequate facilities such as cameras and transport for programmes and news coverage
- A demotivated staff

Further and as a result ZNBC was failing to meet the aspiration of the people. Complaints abound regards reception in some parts of the country, programme repeats and inadequate coverage of some issues. Thus the amendment offered ZNBC a new opportunity to meet the growing demand from the public, she said.

It must be acknowledged that the amendment of the Act came into being due to public interest; the Media reform Committee, Civil Society and others interested in the promotion of democracy. All these recognise the role that ZNBC plays in the dissemination of news and information.

Chimanse reminded her audience that ZNBC as a public broadcaster was by far the largest electronic media institution that combines radio and television and also reaches even the remotest parts of the country.

"This is one of the biggest advantages that the corporation has, its ability to reach a large audience," she emphasized. She said the audience would grow smaller if it was not sustained by news and information that reflects the interests of the people.

"As long as what people want is not taken into account the audience will certainly dwindle," she added, especially with the competition from commercial stations based in Lusaka and community stations across the country.

She further pointed out that the process of selecting a new board for ZNBC as provided for by the Act will allow the corporation to meet public interest. And reminding of the ZNBC adverts she quipped: "They want to see the results of the ambitious 'it will show when you pay' advert or slogan which says nothing of the challenges the broadcaster has to overcome to make it a reality." A new board would

make it easier for ZNBC to deliver news and information, which is unbiased. She observed that representation on the new board was expected to be broad, covering a cross section of society. This would make it possible for ZNBC to meet the demands of the people because “it will be driven by different people with different capacities and interest. Further ZNBC will thus be independent, as the board would give the much needed policy guidance on matters of strategic planning, human resource development and best practices to ensure that the licencees get their value for money.

Chimanse warned that as long as what people want is not taken on board ZNBC will find it difficult to meet its role of providing news and information to Zambians.

“By virtue of it being a public broadcaster ZNBC has to provide an effective channel where interested people can send their views and complaints that should be taken seriously,” she said. She then proposed it might be necessary for stakeholders – that is – the people who pay the licence fee – should create a Public Forum where they can participate in the affairs of ZNBC.

“This will help in building a consensus on issues and allow people to say what they want to see as news and information. After all, it is their institution,” Chimanse concluded.

3.0 Role of ZNBC in meeting Zambia’s News and Information Needs as seen by Joseph Salasini Director General Zambia Broadcasting Corporation

The moderator, Anthony Mukwita then asked Salasini to give his opening statement on the topic. Salasini said he was pleased to present a paper on the subject: “The Role of ZNBC in Meeting Zambia’s News and Information Needs.” He thanked National Director Fanwell Chembo and MISA Zambia for giving ZNBC such an opportunity to speak to the public on this subject.

As most of you may know, the ZNBC was incorporated in 1988 and it existed as the only broadcaster enjoying a monopoly of the airwaves as the only provider of news, information and entertainment. In the third republic the economic situation in the country changed. Government placed its social economic system on policies of liberalisation, privatisation and free enterprise. The effect of this was the dismantling of the monopolistic structure in the economy and media was no exception.

The last decade has seen the growth in new players in both electronic and print media, he said. He pointed out that Zambia now boasted of 15 new radio stations and a couple of TV stations not to mention the multi channel satellite based pay TV and a number of print media organisations. But despite these changes, Salasini said, ZNBC remained the single biggest and primary vehicle for news and information to the public.

The station has also remained as the ultimate platform for national conversations aimed at discussing matters of national interest. As a national broadcaster, Salasini said, ZNBC has the mandate to take the signal to the entire country. In this regard, ZNBC has a well spread reach across Zambia. He revealed that ZNBC’s network consisted of three radio channels and one TV channel. He listed the reach of these channels as follows:

Channel	Language of Broadcast	Reach
Radio 1	7 Local languages	National
Radio 2	English	National
Radio 4	English	Along line Rail Chililabombwe to Livingstone
TV	English	Line of Rail and Provincial centres
TV	35 mins Local language	

Salasini revealed that the corporation had plans to expand the Radio 4 signal. ZNBC has, with the help of Microlink, also developed a website which is visited several hundred times worldwide. ZNBC has plans to place Radio One on the Internet and this will happen within the next quarter (April to June). He said that ZNBC would continue to place high value on its purpose of meeting Zambia's news and information needs. Thus, he found the topic appropriate to discuss in the context of the ZNBC (Amendment) Act of 2002.

3.1 Role of ZNBC as Public Broadcaster

In discussing the topic Salasini outlined the basic facts related to informative and news programming on ZNBC. In terms of hard informative news content the programming profile in time allocation is as follows:

- ZNBC Radio and TV delivers in excess of 50 hours or 3,000 minutes of news per week
- TV alone delivers approximately 10 hours of non news but informative programming per week
- TV provides an additional 4 hours per week of unfiltered or 'open' Public TV popularly known as live interactive programming per week
- Radio has a combined total of more than 100 hours of informative type of programming per week
- Radio boasts of more than 10 hours of unfiltered or 'open' public live interactive programming per week
- Educational content delivered on Radio is in excess of 30 hours per week

He further said that the total numbers of hour of informative and news is 200 hours, making over a third of total available airtime inventory for both Radio and TV per week. He said these fact show that ZNBC had deliberately chosen to give a fair share of its airtime to deliver this critical mandate to news and information to the public.

"We take pride in being the most extensive and diverse news organisation in Zambia providing consistent, relevant and useful information to the public," he emphasized, adding: "3,000 minutes of news per week is a validation of ZNBC's recognition of the importance of news in the political and social economic development of Zambia."

3.2 ZNBC as Public Broadcaster and HIV AIDS

And recognising the fact that this the era of HIV/AIDS Salasini said as a national broadcaster ZNBC was determined to join all other organisations in the fight against this dreaded disease. He said HIV/AIDS had hit the most economically active population – hence, the desire for ZNBC to be involved in the fight,

Further his organisation was also committed to refocus its attention to more development, economic and business issues. ZNBC will provide information that will help improve life. He said to meet its challenges ZNBC was working on a

draft news and current affairs policy that will enable the organisation to tell “the Zambian story with compassion, fairness, determination and resolution.” He also said ZNBC would at the same time create a fora where Zambians “can converse and chat” about their common future.

In terms of providing a platform for “unfiltered open public conversation” ZNBC had given a fair share of time as well. He, however, pointed out that the problem with some of this type of programming while they are good and participatory formats for Radio and TV they required mastering audiovisual language. Thus the final control or responsibility of form and content rested with the broadcaster.

3.3 ZNBC’s Limitations

And despite the apparent rosy picture painted above, Salasini cautioned about the limitation faced by the corporation. He said ZNBC faced severe limitations that affect the corporation’s performance.

“I am not ashamed to say that we are seriously under capitalised and continue to have severe difficulties in our operations,” he said, adding: “It is for this reason that we are unable to cope with the demands of covering an infinite number of interest groups.”

He listed the following as the key limitations:

- Failing obsolete studio equipment
- Declining transmission capacities
- Limited provision of production equipment and the associated back up facilities

But despite these limitations, Salasini said, ZNBC is determined, in keeping with its better TV campaign, to deliver on its commitment. In this regard he listed the following:

- Balanced and diverse news content
- Better programming in all area of television and Radio with special regard to all interest groups
- Improve content and quality of our local productions by establishing ZNBC presence in rural areas
- Source quality foreign programmes that will compliment local ones
- Maintain the highest ethical standards of Broadcasting
- Be more accessible to all our customers, viewers and listeners and respond to their concerns

But Salasini told his audience that ZNBC had developed a strategy “to boost new radio and TV content.” He said to this end the corporation had, for the coming financial year budgeted in excess of K2 Billion.

“I will also take advantage of this platform to mention that since we started collecting TV licences five months ago, we have begun to attend to a few of these critical limitations,” he said.

He then catalogued the following actions:

- Mansa and Kasama TV transmitters now fully reinstated to full power
- Mpika is back on full TV signal
- Pemba and Mumbwa TV transmitter facilities will soon be attended to
- Two additional cameras have been bought
- Three vehicles have been secured to ease up mobility
- New content totalling 20 hours per week have started showing. This will go up to 50 hours per week.

He said the ongoing improvements were a good sign, which would lead to better developments at ZNBC. “My management and staff stand with full confidence to meet the challenges ahead,” he said in conclusion.

4.0 The Role of ZNBC in Meeting Zambia’s News and Information Needs as seen by Leonard Hikaumba President Zambia Congress of Trade Unions

The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions president Leonard Hikaumba started by expressing his pleasure at being asked to address the gathering. He said the topic regards ZNBC’s ability to meet Zambia’s news and information needs was important.

First and foremost ZNBC must provide equal access to people’s expectation. The ZNBC (Amendment) Act number 20 of 2002 provides as follows:

- Varied programming to all sections of the public
- Contribute to development of free speech
- Respect human dignity and human rights
- Defend democratic freedoms
- ZNBC should give equal treatment to men and women

He said ZNBC has a big role to play and in reference to Salasini’s presentation, has limitations. These include inadequate funds, lack of equipment for newsgathering and conditions of service for workers were not so good. However, despite the limited resources ZNBC should provide services within the amended Act. This must be done, Hikaumba said, especially now that the corporation was charging licence fees.

4.1 Observations about ZNBC’s Performance

Hikaumba made the following observations regards ZNBC’s performance as a national broadcaster:

- ZNBC has not lived to our expectations
- Some of the places in the country have no access to the TV signal
- Even where there is TV biased dissemination of information affects viewers
- Programmes by the MMD are promoted and preferred, especially on political issues

He recalled that not so long ago ZNBC gave big coverage of president and his vice president but none for the opposition. He said one disturbing issue, which he had himself proved. He said there was continued manipulation of programming at ZNBC by the political leadership. In this regard he gave the following examples:

- The ZCTU used to run a programme on Saturdays on Radio 2 but the programmes were suspended after they were already paid for
- After the minister of finance spoke on Pay As You Earn and the Wage Freeze – the minister was accorded a chance to explain why government was doing so. ZCTU organised a programme so they could explain why they found government action as unfair. We were called to ZNBC but only learned of the cancellation when I reached the studios

He said when he tried to find out what had happened he was told to find out from Bandika. Reaching Bandika he was told to get in touch with Ben Kangwa but Ben too did not have any information about the cancellation.

“I was given a number to telephone. When I did someone answered from State House. The person said he would get back to me but never did,” Hikaumba said. He said he was surprised that ZNBC was getting instructions from higher authorities outside the corporation.

- The third programme was organised by Frank Mutubila as Sunday Interview. The programme was recorded on a Wednesday. On Sunday I was anxiously waiting to watch the programme. Interestingly even some promotion was aired but when the time came for the programme there was a live football match of some European teams.

He followed up the matter and asked Frank Mutubila who also made some follow-ups. We were told they wanted to remove some parts they decided not to show. Again a similar process had taken place.

“Even if there is good TV if the trend is going to continue people will be misinformed,” Hikaumba said. It was not fair for us to pay licence fees to ZNBC, he said and warned that the labour movement would threaten not to pay ZESCO if unfair coverage continued.

“As trade unions, if there was fair coverage we were going to help ZNBC to get more money.” he said.

Hikaumba added that the bad programming at ZNBC included entertainment and other programmes. He said when one looked at linkages on ZNBC’s website these led to BBC and CNN. How many local entertainment programmes appear on ZNBC, he asked – very few. The explanation is that they do not have money. But what we know is that ZNBC cannot make its own decisions. “These are made elsewhere,” he concluded.

5.0 Debate Among Discussants on the Role of ZNBC in Meeting Zambia's News and Information Needs

The moderator Anthony Mukwita thanked Hikaumba for his contribution. He then revealed that he understands that ZNBC is making K350 million per month from licence fees.

“Television is a good medium and now I would like to encourage debate among the discussants,” he said, adding: “When you switch on ZNBC TV would you like to watch the president, followed by his vice president, secretary to the cabinet and the ministers and party cadres?”

And in the spirit of encouraging debate among discussants he asked Salasini to react to Hikaumba's complaints.

5.1 Salasini's Reaction to Hikaumba's Complaints About the Cancelled TV Programmes

On Hikaumba's complaint Salasini said the nature of public broadcasting was that there are times you have to cancel certain programmes. The reason for this may be the quality of picture or sound. I won't profile reason for cancelling Hikaumba's programme but this has happened to programmes of government officials as well.

“It is not unusual when there are many programmes that have received a similar fate,” he said.

As regards to the Sunday Interview programme that was cancelled, the history of ZNBC is clear. Many such programmes have been displaced by football in the past. “It was unfortunate the programme displaced had Mr Hikaumba and also that sponsors are involved,” he said.

On the question of non-existent TV signal in many places Salasini referred to his prepared presentation.

“I did catalogue some of the things we do,” he said. He confirmed that ZNBC had collected K1 Billion since the licence fees started. He repeated to say that Pemba and Mumbwa transmitters would be on stream within the next few weeks. He also mentioned the two new cameras the corporation had secured. He reminded his listeners that there were more pictures on Television accompanying their news coverage than before.

“The money we collect has been applied to improve services,” he insisted. He bemoaned the level of compliance among eligible TV licence payers. He said compliance was only 43 per cent.

“We are not surprised. We had projected this,” he said. Again he referred to news content which had improved; Children's TV had also improved.

“We will secure programmes for education for kids,” he emphasized. Further, he revealed that the budget of ZNBC couldn't support the production of local programmes. He again referred to the fact that there was more picture than before in

ZNBC's news coverage. He said there were three working cameras in the studio and that, generally, there was a lot of pressure on usage of equipment.

"We hope Zambians can support us," he said.

5.2 Chimanse's Reaction to Salasini's presentation and comments on Hikaumba's complaints.

The moderator said when Hikaumba's programme is removed because of bad picture and sound – what next? He asked Margaret Chimanse for her reaction to Salasini's presentation. He also alerted Ben Kangwa that he might be required to assist in answering the questions being raised.

Chimanse said there was no doubt that the public would like to help ZNBC. She emphasized that the Act number 20 of 2002 is part of the public's attempt to help ZNBC. She said that now that ZNBC was collecting licence fees it was important that the corporation acted within the law. This Act is very clear, she said.

Regards support from the public – this is very possible but the public wont support ZNBC if the corporation doesn't change drastically.

"I don't think it is because of bad picture and sound," she said in reference to the cancellation of the Hikaumba programme.

"We must be honest. If there is censorship tell us," she said sharply. ZNBC must give other stakeholders a chance. If they make a programme they must show it. She reminded her listeners that this was the more reason that the new board at ZNBC "must be operational."

6.0 Questions and Discussions by the Audience on the Role of ZNBC in Meeting Zambia's News and Information Needs

The moderator thanked the three discussants for their openness in discussing the topic. He then turned to the audience.

“Now time is yours, ask the questions. I will take questions in sets of three. Please be brief,” Mukwita advised.

The first question was from Simon Mwamba from Yatsani Radio. He asked Salasini that in his presentation he had talked of three cameras that the corporation has and also about pressure – where was this pressure coming from? Secondly he had noticed that there was a lot of coverage of the MMD – do you charge them? he asked. Lastly he asked when ZNBC would introduce more local language broadcasting on ZNBC.

The next questions were from Robert Mwanza, a lawyer based in Kitwe. He said he had travelled to Lusaka specifically to attend the public discussion. He had two points he wished to raise:

- In my view the 43 per cent compliance in our current situation should make ZNBC consider itself as lucky. To get 43 per cent and what is brought out – biased reporting. Chances are that the 57 per cent who do not comply are seriously disenchanted. If there were improvement these would definitely comply.
- The second point – in the event ZNBC does not improve I appeal to ZCTU to talk to its members and others to review their stance about paying licence fees.

And Irene Nkole from Mount Makulu research Station in Lusaka asked Mr Salasini and Mr Hikaumba why when there is a meagre salary increase for civil servants this is highly publicised.

The moderator asked Salasini to attempt answering the first set of questions raised by the audience.

6.1 Salasini's response to the first set of questions from the audience

The pressure I was talking about is from the many demands for ZNBC services. As regards to MMD coverage, here there is need to distinguish between discussion programmes that are paid for and renewal of party cards. The renewal of party cards programmes have not been paid for especially when the Republican president is in attendance. These include the provincial conference.

When do we increase airtime for local language broadcasts? “We are thinking about that? As to how much time, there we are thin on time especially for television. Take Radio One – this is Radio Two times seven in terms of staffing by different people.

Robert Mwanza from the Copperbelt is quite unhappy. He said 57 per cent are also not happy because of the way we cover politics. The truth, however, is that only two percent of our programming is political.

“If you visit our archives political content is 3 per cent. ZNBC is not as bad as you put it,” he said, adding: “We have in excess of 4 hours unfiltered TV and up to one and half hours is phone in programmes per week.” He said the corporation does not interfere with recorded programmes.

To Irene from Mount Makulu, the ZNBC acting director general said he was not quite sure how to respond.

“I am not a journalist but I am aware that the more powerful you are the more you are covered. Every one is watching what they say each time quantum in terms of value,” Salasini said.

6.2 Hikaumba’s response to the first set of questions by the audience

“Before I comment on the issues raised by the audience I would have liked to have a clear answer,” Hikaumba said in reaction to Salasini’s statement that the programme was cancelled because of bad picture and sound. The first programme cancelled was going to be a live programme.

“I do not understand why they anticipated a live programme would have a bad picture and sound,” Hikaumba said.

On the question raised by Irene from Mount Makulu the ZCTU leader said this was the question of newspapers and their headlines.

“They want to show that workers have a pay bonanza but runaway from the pay freeze saying this is not there,” he said agreeing with Irene’s observation. On increases on PAYE for workers earning, for instance K2 million per year, newspapers write you pay an extra K21, 000 only. But when with the pay freeze the likely increment is only K4, 000 what happens?

“They say you are going to pay K21, 000 only,” he said.

6.3 Ben Kangwa’s comments on issues raised by the audience and Hikaumba

The moderator then asked Ben Kangwa to make some comments on the issues raised so far. In his comment Kangwa said he only wished to add on what Salasini had said. “We still have few cameras. At the moment we use Hone TV and ZIS so as to have adequate picture,” he said. He told the audience that the ZNBC TV newsroom on its own required 10 cameras to provide adequate outside coverage. He called for people who can assist in providing picture content for television news. On the question of local languages Kangwa said this issue was important. He said the corporation was doing a lot and hoped between 9th and 15th April a number of things would have happened including bring back to stream some of the transmitters that Salasini had spoken about.

Mukwita – The brother from Yatsani Radio talked about pressure. Is there any moment that minister of Information and Broadcasting Mutale Nalumango or George Chulumanda tried to interfere? Say this honestly?

Salasini – I have been in that office for six months. I come from the Commercial wing. Ben has said he gets pressure but I don’t get any pressure. What I know is that you get pressure because everyone wants to be covered. I don’t get whispers from State House.

Kangwa – The pressure I talked about is the result of assignments from different groups. At times our crews get late because they have to hop from one assignment to another. That is the pressure I was talking about.

The moderator then moved to the next set of questions. Tembo Mzondi a visitor from South Africa rose. He said he had come to Zambia to assist Zambia Police set up its own trade union. Mzondi was worried that the minister of Information and Broadcasting Services was not present to answer some of the questions raised by the audience. He regarded as unfair to ask the acting Director General whether a member of staff in the newsroom gets pressure. He recalled the

apartheid system in South Africa but got worried when Salasini said the programme was cancelled because of bad picture and sound. He said camera could not get a bad picture, the person handling it could. What is the corporation doing to train its staff so they can get good pictures? He hoped the minister would in future attend. “Government and the minister should take this seriously. To show one side of the story is incorrect. But, however, I suggest that Zambians will continue paying the licence fees,” he said.

The next questions were from Emmanuel Mwamba. He said the ZNBC (Amendment) Act has not been implemented. He part of the reason was that ZNBC was not involved in the campaign for reforming these laws. It was MISA Zambia and PAZA – “ZNBC were not there. ZNBC has said if you pay it will show – it is not the licence fees but the programmes. There may be need to retrain all management staff to change their attitude. The acting Director General should not be there. A new board is required as per new law so the approach can change. “All media law reform is at the centre of democracy in the country.”

Presley Chiyesu asked what had happened to live TV programmes from Parliament. He also asked what ZNBC’s road map was to implement changes as per new ZNBC Act. He complained that ZNBC appears to fail to manage time because of programme over runs. “You can’t manage time,” he concluded.

6.4 Salasini’s response to the second set of questions from the audience

Salasini started his response with Emmanuel Mwamba’s questions. He said it appeared Mwamba seemed to say that ZNBC management did not understand the amended act. That we at ZNBC were not part of the campaign to amend the Act. “I am not qualified to comment on that. The view about our coverage and the political content is under 4 per cent. The rest of the coverage is other programmes. True we need to focus on news and the needs of Zambians,” he said.

As for the programmes which cover this Salasini said may be this needed increasing. He reminded his audience that “political interest is not the only one.” He again indicated that there was a lot of pressure from a lot of interest groups. “Sometime we do forget we have one TV channel only. Radio has more flexibility,” he added.

On Chiyesu’s question whether ZNBC had any strategic plan or road map Salasini invited the questioner to visit ZNBC offices.

“I will show you what we have. We do have proposals on how this can be financed,” he said. ZNBC as a public broadcaster covers the whole country both for radio and television.

“I am hesitant but tempted to tell you what our plans are to cover the whole country. However, I hope we will do so soon,” he said.

On the statement by Mzondi that cameras are not faulty but people are Salasini said all the people at ZNBC have been trained post basic training.

“We have a plan as a team and management. For instance government did go ahead and cut back on their subvention to the corporation. We working to cover up for the short fall,” he said.

On coverage of Parliamentary debates Salasini said this was very expensive. “It was very costly and ZNBC can not afford this. We tried to do this but have since reduced to 10-15 minutes programme Inside Parliament,” he said. ZNBC had, however,

continued to cover Parliament through radio. On time keeping and schedules, Salasini admitted there was a problem.

“It has been a victim of over run especially for late programmes,” he said, adding: “Yes, we still have a problem.”

6.5 Hikaumba’s response to the second sets of questions and his final comment on the topic ZNBC’s Role in Meeting Zambia’s News and Information Needs.

The moderator then announced that Mr Hikaumba was about to leave because of another engagement. He said he would allow Hikaumba to address some of the questions raised but also to make his final comments on the topic.

And Hikaumba said now he was aware that colleagues from ZNBC were indeed under pressure though they had failed to admit it. “If we put so much pressure they will be removed,” he joked. Then he recalled that between 1990 and 1991 the MMD took the media including ZNBC to the High Court for not covering them fairly.

In the MMD Manifesto of 1991 the MMD said it believed in Freedom of Information as a basic human right. Former president Frederick Chiluba in Washington in 1992 told the Americans that “Press Freedom must not only be observed but must be seen to be there. Thus it was Hon Dipak Patel as minister of Information and Broadcasting Services who started the whole process of Media Law Reform. He set up a committee, which outlined all the laws that hinder Press Freedom so that they can be repealed and that ZNBC ought to be totally removed from government control.

In 1996 Eric Islamabad as deputy minister for Special Duties in the office of the President told Article 19 that government had received the report by the committee set up by Dipak Patel. These recommendations have not been implemented. Thus the onus is on government to have these laws amended. Hikaumba appealed to people in the media and the public at large to continue putting pressure on government so they can fulfil their promise to amend these laws. He thanked MISA Zambia for according him a chance to participate in the discussion.

6.6 Chimanse’s response to the questions raised by the audience

As Hikaumba left the moderator now asked Margaret Chimanse to respond to some of the concerns raised by the audience. Chimanse said that she wished to echo some of the comments made by Mzondi regarding the minister of Information and Broadcasting Mutale Nalumango not being present to answer some questions raised here.

“Putting in place a new board is important,” she said. “Licence fees is just a by the way.”

Chimanse again emphasized the ZNBC (Amendment) Act of 2002. She said this Act is very clear in terms of the role of ZNBC. Other issues are important which relate to this law.

“What is information? It is not enough to cover something. It must be taken seriously from the top down,” she said.

If the corporation does not have direction then there is a problem. If the corporation does not have its priorities then there is a problem.

“If you say pay and it will show, and then it must really show,” she said, adding: “ZNBC is an important stakeholder. News it broadcasts should cover everybody that is the essence of democracy. We know there are problems but they must be seen to be solved.”

The moderator asks Kangwa to comment before he could ask Mbiji Mufalo to make his observations or questions.

Kangwa – The observations that are being made are of paramount importance to ZNBC. I know that we have a news policy and this takes the views of every one on board. However, it must be remember that good things take long to materialise. Mwamba talked about workshops that PAZA and MISA organised prior to the amendment of the ZNBC Act. ZNBC has played an important role in MISA’s programmes for two years before the two laws were enacted. We even provided airtime on a day that was seen as not conducive but today that programme on Sundays has become popular and is watched by many.

Mbiji Mufalo – I get a sense that we are not contextualising content. This country is in a coma. If a government is not functioning, as Nalumango will want to show that they are working when they are not. It was mentioned there were only three cameras but why should a camera go to the MMD secretariat? Then there is the question of internal censorship. Before a programme is censored all we know that a minister wanted to preview the programme. Then it is censored.

Mukwita – He asked Calisto Chitamfya from ZNBC and the man behind the “it will show” image to comment.

Chitamfya – He said he was actively involved in the better TV “it will show” campaign. On the role of a licence, Chitamfya said, the ZNBC conducted a research regarding the BBC. He also talked to many stakeholders. The licence fee has everything to do with ZNBC’s independence from government. To remove all press from political and commercial control. The licence fees problems are perceived. In scheduling the licence fees is important. In the past the first question we asked ourselves was – Is this programme sponsored or not. If it was sponsored then automatically it was placed on the schedule. Remember he who pays the piper calls the tune. If there was no sponsorship there was no schedule. This time, with the licence fees, we have some independence. With licence fees we are likely to improve our image as a public broadcaster and this is what we are supposed to be. Scheduling will be sorted out.

Mukwita – we will take one last question then I will ask Mr Salasini and later Chimanse to make closing remarks.

Mwila – I am Simon Mwila, interim secretary of the trade union at ZNBC. He refers to the issue of muzzling of other stakeholders by the MMD. He said the trade union at ZNBC and the public media generally, was not confrontational to the management. Indeed the MMD in 1990 took public media to court. Since we know who are in the wrong now why don’t we take such people to court? People in management and ourselves, we are in the middle of the battlefield between the people and the government. What ZNBC workers want is justice? He did not agree with Hikaumba’s stance regards licence fees.

Mukwita – I am sorry we cannot go beyond this we have run out of time. Well the topic this evening was – The Role of ZNBC in Meeting Zambia’s News and Information Needs. I will now ask Mr Salasini to summarise his views.

6.7 Salasini’s closing remarks on the topic – the Role of ZNBC in Meeting Zambia’s News and Information Needs

In his closing remarks Salasini told his audience that his profiling of the content in ZNBC’s broadcasts speaks volumes. “We have a lot of challenges to deal with and we will do so with our staff,” he said.

He appreciated having been asked to take part in the discussion. “We do as a country have serious problems. Now we would wish to discuss some of these issues. We will join hands with other stakeholders to pay more attention to issues of development. There will be a deliberate increase in approach to issues of development. Unless we grow, we cannot succeed.

6.8 Chimanse’s closing remarks on the topic – the Role of ZNBC in Meeting Zambia’s News and Information Needs

In her closing remarks Chimanse said ZNBC was an important stakeholder. Thus management must take the challenges posed by its position as a public broadcaster seriously. As a public broadcaster ZNBC belongs to the people. The starting point is the board.

“The board is important. A lot of things could be solved if the board was in place,” she said. Paying a TV licence was nothing by itself. The Media Legal Reform Committee will make sure that the ZNBC (Amendment) Act is implemented, she concluded.